



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

NOTES ON SHAKESPEARE

The commonly accepted reading of *Macbeth* 5. 3. 55-6 is as follows:

What rhubarb, senna, or what purgative drug
Would scour these English hence?

This is based on the Fourth Folio, the first to read *senna* for *Cyme* of the First Folio. The Second Folio, followed by the Third, has *Cæny*. The reading *senna* has, therefore, no authority whatever, being merely a conjectural emendation for the unknown word *Cyme*. Badham, as quoted by Furness, remarks rightly: 'The only pretension to probability [of *senna*] is, that the *Pharmacopœa* offers us no cathartic whose name is not still more remote from the corrupted word.' But, so far as I know, no plausible suggestion has been made as to the name of the 'purgative drug' Shakespeare had in mind. Perhaps it might be added that, to correspond with rhubarb, the name of some common plant would best solve the problem.

It seems to me that *Cyme*, a not unusual botanical term, is the right word and that any change is unnecessary. One may notice a passage from Philemon Holland's translation of Pliny's *Natural History* (1801), a work with which Shakespeare was, as is well known, acquainted. The following is from p. 26 of the second volume:

Moreover, like as Coleworts may be cut at all times of the yeere for our use, so may they be sown and set all the yeere long. . . . The tender crops called Cymæ, after the first cutting, they yeeld the Spring next following: now are these Cymæ nothing els but the delicat tops or dantier tendrils of the maine stem.

A few lines below, the word is Anglicized in a description of the different kinds of coleworts: 'And yet none put forth their Cymes or tender buds more than they.'

Many uses of the colewort in medicine are given in the ninth chapter of the twentieth book; the following lines are from p. 48:

The Greeke writers of greatest antiquitie, have made three kinds of Coleworts: to wit, the crisped or ruffed Cole, which they called Selinas or Selinoides, for the resemblance that the leaves have to Parsley: These Coleworts bee good for the stomacke, and gently loosen the belly.

As the reading *Cyme* of the First Folio is perfectly intelligible, there is no reason why it should not be restored to the text, and understood as meaning the tops and tendrils of the colewort.

The explanation commonly given of the following lines from *King Lear* (2. 2. 33-6) seems far-fetched:

Kent. . . . Draw, you rogue; for, though it be night, yet the moon shines.
I'll make a sop o' the moonshine of you, you whoreson cullionly barber-monger.

Unfortunately, the commentators have found a reference to a dish called 'eggs in moonshine,' and try to discover some possible connection of this with Kent's words. The real meaning would seem to be much simpler and more obvious. The ground is drenched in moonlight, and Kent, in blustering fashion, merely threatens to 'sop up' some of this moonlight with the body of the detested Oswald. The threat is in the same tone as, and not much different in meaning from, the common American colloquialism: 'I'll wipe up the ground with you.' The unlucky reference to 'eggs in moonshine' should be banished as having no connection whatever with the thought in Kent's mind.

The passage in which Macbeth rouses the murderers to kill Banquo (3. 1. 91-103) is probably taken from Erasmus' colloquy *Philodoxus*. In the latter, Symbulus urges Philodoxus to distinguish himself from the common herd. The similarity is so striking that it can hardly be accidental. The passage from Erasmus is transcribed from the Elzevir edition of 1643:

1. *Mur.* We are men, my liege.

Macb. Ay, in the catalogue ye go
for men,

As hounds and greyhounds, mongrels,
spaniels, curs,

Shoughs, water-rugs, and demi-wolves
are clept

All by the name of dogs; the valued
file

Distinguishes the swift, the slow,
the subtle,

The housekeeper, the hunter, every
one

According to the gift which bounteous
nature

Hath in him clos'd; whereby he does
receive

Particular addition, from the bill
That writes them all alike; and so
of men.

Now, if you have a station in the
file,

Not i' the worst rank of manhood,
say't.

SY. Omnes canes sub una specie continentur: sed hæc species quam in innumeras formas distrahitur? ut dicas illos genere distingui, non specie. Iam prorsus in eadem specie quam varii sunt canum mores, et ingenia? PH. Immensa varietas. SY. Quod de canibus dictum est, de singulis animantium generibus dictum puta: sed in nullo magis elucet discrimen, quam in equis. PH. Vera prædicas. Sed quorsum hæc? SY. Quidquid in animantium generibus, vel in formis, vel in singulis animantibus varietatis est, hoc omne puta esse in homine. Illic reperies lupos varios, canes inenarrabili varietate, elephantos, camelos, asinos, leones, oves, viperas, simios, dracones, aquilas, vultures, hirundines, hirudines; et quid non? . . . SY. Scis autem virtutem circa difficultia versari. . . . Proin da operam ut in bello dux esse malis quam miles.

Not only is the general wording similar, but the whole idea is the same; in both, the comparison of the different classes of men to animals is used to rouse the person or persons addressed to some act that may take him out of the mere 'catalogue,' and place himself where he will 'have a station in the file.' I believe that other passages in *Macbeth*, chiefly those dealing directly with his ideas of obtaining glory, are influenced by this dialogue of Erasmus.

JOHN D. REA.

Indiana University.